



Fish Skin Binding: [Re]introducing this distinctive material for unique bindings

Peter D. Verheyen
The Guild of Book Workers Standards
October 7, 2021

Wild/Life!



Trout parchment by Kyle A. Clark (left) and Atlantic salmon parchment by Karen Hanmer (above)

October 7, 2021

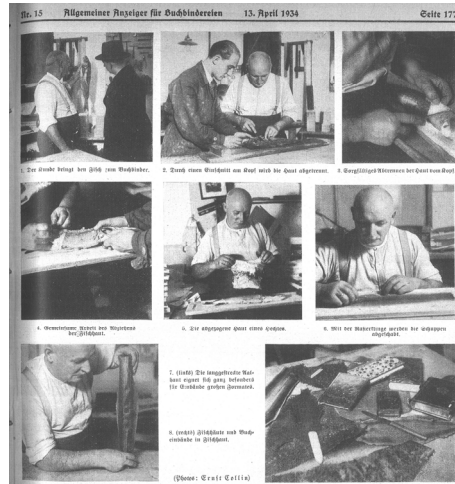
Peter D. Verheyen | Guild of Book Workers Standards

2

How did we get here?

Two beautiful bindings in fish parchment.

How did it start?



Bucheinbände aus Fischhaut (1934) by Ernst Collin (left) and Fips and his eels (1937)

October 7, 2021

Peter D. Verheyen | Guild of Book Workers Standards

3

Fish skin preserved and used in many cultures.

Resurgent in indigenous cultures, fashion, and more.

I had used commercial skins occasionally on bindings.

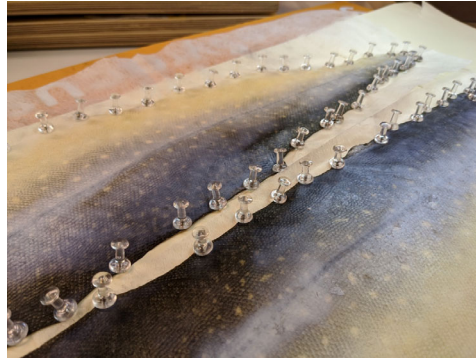
Finding increasing sources as part of my Ernst Collin *Bone Folder* project.

First mentioned as material in Zeidler (1708), then by Martini in 1916 with materials tests...

Austerity measure in WW I and post-war Germany, later means to reduce dependence on foreign sources...

Fish may have usefulness for objets d'art (Galanteriewerke), but said that bookbinders might try their hand at making it once or twice before returning to their favorite [real] leathers. From *Das Falzbein*, 1960.

Playing with my food



Playing with my food. Salmon at left, Arctic char above.
When dry, the parchment will be highly translucent.

October 7, 2021

Peter D. Verheyen | Guild of Book Workers Standards

4

Most articles described making parchment.

My favorite material.

Reached out to Jesse Meyer/Pergamena who offered some suggestions, but had no experience. Still, very useful.

How hard could it be? If “Fips” could, I can.

Testing

Salmon Parchment Fold Test



MIT Folding Endurance Tester
At University of Iowa Center for the Book
Research and Production Paper Facility

Salmon Parchment Tear Test



Elmendorf Tear Tester
At University of Iowa Center for the Book
Research and Production Paper Facility

Thank YOU Tim!

Material	Test	Tests	Final Averages
Fish Parchment	Fold	2	79,338 folds
	Tear	3, Dis-qualified	NA (Did not tear across full width due to strength)
Goat Parchment	Fold	2	12,015 folds
	Tear	6	784 gr/cm
UICB Flax Papercase Paper, circa 1992	Fold	60	4501 folds[1]
	Tear	60	828 gr/cm[2]

October 7, 2021

Peter D. Verheyen | Guild of Book Workers Standards

5

Tests conducted by Timothy Barrett, Thank YOU.

Duplicated as best as possible given nomenclature and unknowns of original 1916 tests made on Franz Martini's skins.

Incredible strength!

<https://pressbengel.blogspot.com/2019/10/some-shorts-of-testing-process-on-my.html>

Populating my “aquarium”



October 7, 2021

Peter D. Verheyen | Guild of Book Workers Standards

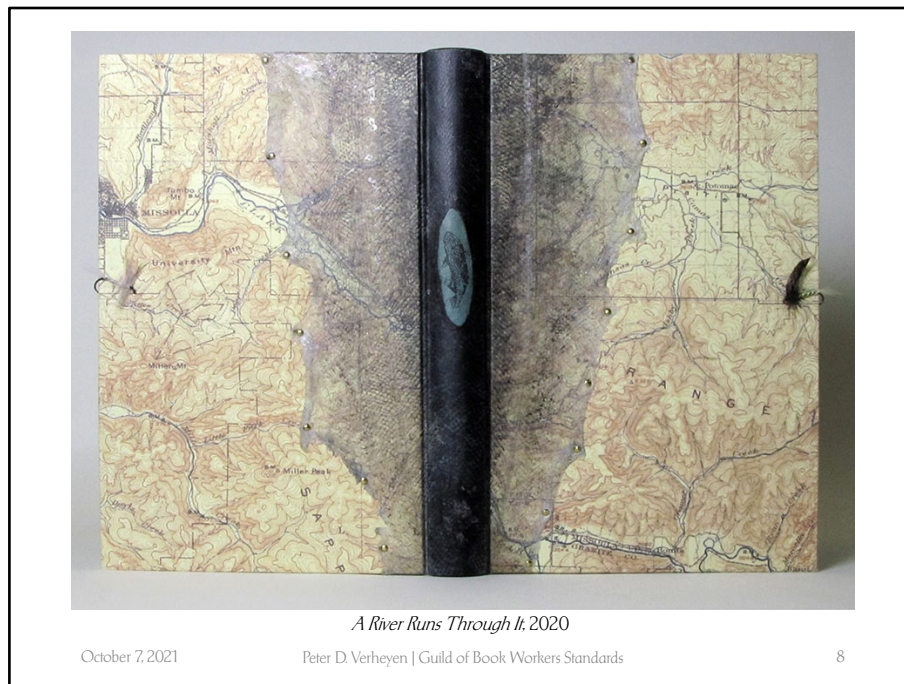
6

Thank you Erin Fletcher

From left: Atlantic salmon, Arctic char, haddock, lane snapper, sea bass, mackerel



Atlantic salmon with paste paper



Quarter rainbow trout over USGS map

Material and process as metaphor (Minsky)



Mackerel, shark, wood with goat parchment



Text from 1910

Mix of green tea tanned steelhead, and walleye and char parchment, with salmon details

Material and process as metaphor

It's more fun together...



At left, Lena Krämer's "Playground for Miniature Books"

October 7, 2021

Peter D. Verheyen | Guild of Book Workers Standards

11

Fish skin in binding never really took off.

"Try it and move on".

Shared on my blog and in two journal articles.

COVID project and a Bind-O-Rama challenge.

Despite sharing for a few years, was "put up" to demonstrate via a webinar.

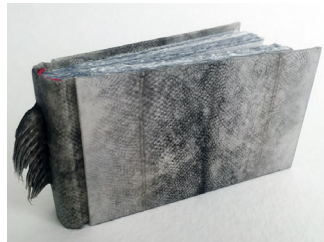
21 participants spread from Sweden to Australia, no Germans, 3 added after, will continue to add.

<https://www.philobiblon.com/bindorama20>

Others teaching workshops on making parchment and/or tanning.

2 in GBW *Wild/Life* exhibit; Karen Hanmer and Kyle Clark.

Some Bind-O-Rama entries



Lili Hall Sharp



Bertil Gustavsson



Karen Hanmer

October 7, 2021



Gloria Conti

Peter D. Verheyen | Guild of Book Workers Standards

12

From top left (clockwise)

Lili Hall, Bertil Gustavsson, Gloria Conti, Karen Hanmer

Learning more

- Parchment “easiest”
 - “[Fips’ and His Eels: Fish Skin in Bookbinding](#)”. Book Arts arts du livre Canada (Vol. 10, Nr. 2, 2019)
 - “[Fish Tales, experiments with fish skin for bookbinding](#)”. The New Bookbinder: Journal of Designer Bookbinders (2020)
 - Fish Skin Posts on the [Pressbengel Project blog](#)
- Tanning
 - [Janey Chang](#) in Vancouver has also been offering terrific online tanning workshops.
 - Fish Leather: Tanning + Sewing by Lotta Rahme and Dag Hartman. Available in North American from Janey Change and elsewhere.

October 7, 2021

Peter D. Verheyen | Guild of Book Workers Standards

13

<https://www.philobiblon.com/bindorama20>

Others teaching workshops on making parchment and/or tanning.

So, be like 'Fips'



Make parchment or tan, bind, and share in exhibits,
the [Bind-O-Rama](#), and elsewhere.
Once you try, you'll be hooked!

For more information, verheyen@philobiblon.com

October 7, 2021

Peter D. Verheyen | Guild of Book Workers Standards

14

<https://www.philobiblon.com/bindorama20>